



Unit .23

Session .03

Jesus Teaches About Prayer

Scripture



**Luke 11:1-4,
9-13; 18:1-8**

1 He was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.” **2** He said to them, “Whenever you pray, say, Father, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. **3** Give us each day our daily bread. **4** And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us. And do not bring us into temptation.” ... **9** “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. **11** What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? **12** Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,

how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” ... **1** Now he told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not give up. **2** “There was a judge in a certain town who didn’t fear God or respect people. **3** And a widow in that town kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ **4** “For a while he was unwilling, but later he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or respect people, **5** yet because this widow keeps pestering me, I will give her justice, so that she doesn’t wear me out by her persistent coming.’” **6** Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** Will not God grant justice to his elect who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay helping them? **8** I tell you that he will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Intro Options



Main Point:
Jesus taught His
disciples to pray with
faith, persistence, and
dependence on God.

Option 1

Imagine your church has a prayer team. The pastor has asked your youth group to take on the prayer team's try-outs, coaching, and recruiting. To do so, split your youth group into smaller groups. Each group should choose to run one of the following: recruiting, try-outs, or coaching. If a group chooses recruiting, their job is to figure out ways to recruit people to the prayer team: they might make posters, come up with a little jingle or rhyme to attract people, or they might make a radio or TV commercial to play before or during the service. Ask them to zero in on what makes for "the right stuff" in a prayer warrior.

If the group chooses try-outs, they should figure out how they will make certain someone is "qualified" to join the prayer team. They should run the "try-out" somewhat like an athletic team try-out (by the way, it's okay to be a bit funny here; no need to take this exercise too seriously). What kinds of "exercises" would they make the potentials do (e.g., praying for at least a certain length of time, knowing so many verses, having so many percent of their prayers answered, etc.).

If the group chooses coaching, they should run a prayer team "practice." It'll probably be like the try-out, but these prayers warriors are on the team. How would they improve their "prayer game"? Would they focus on repetition? Study? Memorization?

See what the students come up with for each area. How do their answers show we what think makes for a good prayer? In today's lesson, we'll see three things Jesus calls for in our prayers: faith, dependence, and persistence. Did these three characteristics make it into any of your youth group's exercises?

Option 2

Pretend a local mental health clinic has called on your youth group to help them out. They are going to address a few specific mental health issues in an upcoming fair, and they want your students to produce some materials to aid them.

Specifically, they want your goods to produce posters or recorded skits; each poster or skit should give one bad and one good example. They may choose from one of three subjects: dependence, faith, and persistence. For example, one of your students might choose to make a poster. She should draw one example of bad dependence and one example of good dependence: the first example might be an overly clingy romantic relationship, and the second might be a child depending on his father for food.

Give them time to make and then to share their drawings and skits. Debrief what patterns you saw in the bad examples and what patterns you saw in the good examples. In today's lesson, Jesus will call for us to use dependence, faith, and persistence in our prayers. When we exercise these traits toward God in prayer, how are they like the good examples in the students' posters and skits?

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 11:1-4.



When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, the first thing He told them to do is to recall God's glory. His kingdom and His will are foremost on Jesus' mind, and they should be foremost on all of ours. Without a firm belief in the fact that God sustains everything—from the breath we just took to whatever requests we might have in mind—our prayers are of little value.

Jesus reminds us to acknowledge the glory of God, not because it is dependent upon our acknowledgment, but because our prayers rely wholly upon His glory. Before we ask God a single thing, we need to be aware that He is already the giver of everything. His kingdom is coming, and His purposes will be done (Matt. 6:10). 

The purposes of God's kingdom remain sure whether we pray for it or not. This prayer is more of a reminder for us. We pause to remember that God has a purpose for His creation and that we are part of His master plan. We pause to remind ourselves to be submissive to whatever part He has given us. We pause to remind ourselves that "our God is in heaven and does whatever he pleases" (Ps. 115:3). We pause to orient ourselves around God and to remind ourselves that our prayers are an instrument in His hand for the glory of His kingdom.

▪ How can you remind yourself of God's glory when you pray?

When we pray to God, we can pray for our daily bread because our daily bread is His concern. He cares how we will be fed, how we will be clothed, and how we will survive from day to day. He takes great interest in our physical needs.

Jesus reminds us that not only are our bodily needs God's concern but also our spiritual needs. He reminds us to pray for our deepest need: the forgiveness of the sin that separates us from God. Then He reminds us to pray that we might grow more and more like our forgiving God as we forgive the sins of others. In these two simple requests—bread and forgiveness—Jesus captures our physical and spiritual needs and reminds us to rely on the God who sustains us in both of them. 

▪ When have you seen God uniquely meet your physical and/or spiritual needs?

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 56, DDG)

Prayer and Providence

If God is in control and already knows the future, why pray? The Bible teaches that although God has a plan for this world that He promises to fulfill, prayer is often the means God uses to accomplish His divine purpose. Even though God knows the end result, the means that lead to that end result will be accomplished through prayer. In this sense, it is true that "prayer changes things," and it is also true that God uses prayer to change our hearts so that our will comes into conformity with His.

COMMENTARY

Luke 11

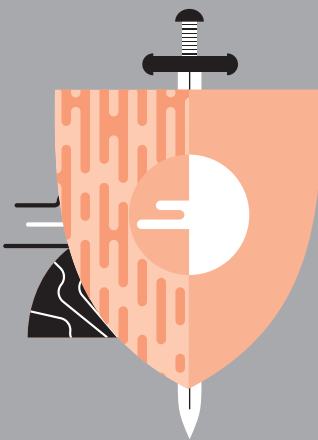
Main Point:
Jesus taught His disciples to pray with faith, persistence, and dependence on God.

11-4. Jesus' prayer is the most familiar prayer in the world—what we call the Lord's Prayer. It is a model prayer which Jesus used as an outline for teaching His followers. These are the ideas we should focus on in our prayers:

- **Praise:** God is holy, and although it doesn't have to be the first thing we do when we pray, we are called to make a priority of recognizing and expressing the worth of God's name and character.
- **Purposes:** God's kingdom is present wherever Jesus reigns. We are to pray that sin and its consequences would be abolished, and instead that people would live in submission to Jesus and according to His purposes. Further, we are to be active in bringing these things about.
- **Provision:** Many times, we think we have the things we need because we work for them. But the truth is we depend on God for everything, even the simplest things. Everything in the universe belongs to God, and we have only what He chooses to give us, and we are called to continually express our dependence on Him.
- **Pardon:** We've all sinned. In fact, because we will struggle with the flesh as long as we're in this life, we continue to sin. When we do, we're responsible to ask God for forgiveness—not just generally, but for every specific sin. When we confess and turn away, God is kind to offer forgiveness for sins both big and small, and we're called to forgive in the same way.
- **Protection:** We're caught up in a spiritual battle, and the souls of all people—including our own—are on the line. Because our flesh is weak and tempted toward sin, we need God's strength and protection against the forces of evil which are set on our destruction.

9-13. "Jesus' model of prayer emphasizes simplicity in approaching God as our loving and providing Father. This is buttressed by a series of encouraging images of God's heart towards us. If we ask and seek and knock we will receive gifts from our Father, based not on our goodness or effort but on his nature as a loving Father. This revelation of who God is for us in Christ is a warm invitation to cast our cares on him (1 Pet. 5:7), seeking him with confidence, not fear (Heb. 4:16). The God-honoring response to this revelation is worship and rejoicing in his gift."¹

In Defense (p. 58, DDG)



Prayer is the act of our going to God in worship, confession of sin, thanksgiving, and in expressing dependence upon Him. However, Scripture teaches that God is so holy, He cannot even look upon sin (Hab. 1:13). Further, if we accept sin in our lives instead of continually turning away, the Lord doesn't even hear our prayers (Ps. 66:18). In fact, in order to approach God, He requires that we are perfect—and none of us are. But Jesus is! As Jesus celebrated the experiences of His disciples, He recognized that God's purposes were being realized, and His natural response was to offer praise and thanks to God. Jesus has a relationship with the Father the way God intended for all people. For those who trust in Jesus, we have the privilege of approaching God, not just once a year like the earthly high priests, but any time we choose. Jesus did everything necessary for us to come to God. Let's never neglect this privilege.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 11:9-13.



In this passage, Jesus told His disciples that they should ask, seek, and knock. In other words, prayer is not passive, wishful thinking, but implies activity and initiative. Prayer, then, makes us active participants in the plan that God has for us, not just bystanders. Through prayer, we make our desires known, speaking up and asking in faith.

When we shrink back from going before the throne in prayer, we rob ourselves of participating in God's glorious plan of providing for us. We spiritually sit in the back row mindlessly scrolling our phones when we have been offered a front-row seat. Our prayers play an active role in helping us view God as the giver of all good gifts. We need to take advantage of this beautiful opportunity to obey Him.

▪ Have you ever found yourself hesitating to ask God for something?

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he taught them to address God as Father. The address is not an incidental afterthought, but an encouragement to see God as just that: Father and Sustainer. Jesus does not paint a picture here of a divine Being who sits in heaven unwilling to hear the cries of our heart. Instead, he shows us a loving Father who delights to give us good things.

Not all of us having loving earthly fathers. Sadly, some of us can imagine a dad who would give his son a snake instead of a fish, or a scorpion instead of an egg. But even those who are far off from God can recognize that this type of man is the unfortunate exception. Even a man of the most questionable character is capable of showing love to his children. How much more so the God of the universe—our Father in heaven! He made Adam with His own hands and sustains the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve with so much loving care. He sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross for us and to spare us a deserved separation from Him for all eternity.

▪ What are some additional reminders in Scripture that teach us that God is good and cares for His people?

Read Luke 18:1-8.



This story is not just about the unprotected and undervalued members of society, though it is one small aspect of the story Jesus told. It is instead about the fact that our persistence in going to God in prayer has the ability to teach us something about the God we serve. In Jesus' tale, the judge is an unrighteous man who does not naturally care for the widow who should be under his care. It is her persistence that sways him to do the right thing. 

Jesus compared this unrighteous judge to His Father in heaven, the ultimately righteous Judge, and the contrast is sharp. God is not waiting to be convinced to help us; He stands ready and willing to help us. Our persistence, then, is not something that controls the outcome—God is already willing to help His children. Rather, our persistence continually puts our hearts in a posture of prayerful waiting.

▪ How would you assess the persistence of your own prayer life?

not persistent

seldom persistent

somewhat persistent

notably persistent



COMMENTARY

Luke 18

Main Point:
Jesus taught His disciples to pray with faith, persistence, and dependence on God.

1-8. The widow is an unlikely hero for Jesus' narrative. In near eastern culture, the widow was far from a heroine: "The loss of a husband in ancient Israel was normally a social and economic tragedy. In a generally patriarchal culture, the death of a husband usually meant a type of cultural death as well. Although the denotation of widow referred to a woman whose husband had died, because of the social context the word quickly acquired the connotation of a person living a marginal existence in extreme poverty ... Her crisis was aggravated if she had no able-bodied children to help her work the land of her dead spouse. To provide for her children, to maintain the estate, and to continue payments on debts accrued by her husband imposed severe burdens. Since she was in an extremely vulnerable economic position, she became the prime target of exploitation. The fact that she was classed with the landless stranger and Levite indicates that she was often unable to keep her husband's land."

Activity

You may be familiar with the familiar motivational posters: often set in a black surrounding frame, they feature a beautiful picture with a single word in large print at the bottom, and underneath the large word is a short sentence of explanation (for example: Diligence. Careful persistence pays off).

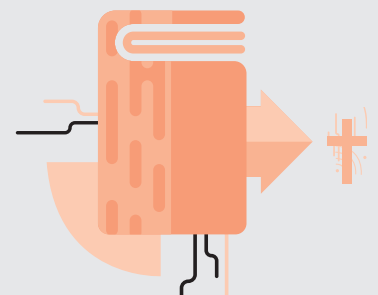
Your youth group is to create motivational prayer posters to use in your church's prayer room (if you don't have one, pretend you're going to make one. Or, they can make posters to use in whatever room of their room they use for prayer and study). They should choose one of the three main traits from the lesson (faith, dependence, persistence) and make a motivational poster specifically for prayer. They should include a picture (they can draw one, or they can find a neat picture from the Internet) and a short clause or phrase underneath the word.

For example, if they choose persistence and depict Luke 18's widow knocking at the door, or the judge inside at his table with his head in his hands as he hears the widow knocking; their explanation might be, "Because God is far more ready to hear than any surly judge." They might choose dependence and show a little child looking to her father for a gift, followed by the explanation, "No evil father can out-give a good God." They don't need to use pictures directly from the text; they might show a person following a navigation system as a depiction of faith with the label, "Because he's never been wrong before."

Once students have made their pictures, let them share them. Discuss how these posters can prompt you to more frequent and more biblical prayers, especially in bringing others to faith.

(p. 57, DDG) Christ Connection

Jesus taught us to pray with dependence on God, recognizing our physical and spiritual needs which only He can supply; faith in God, knowing He is our good and loving Father; and with persistence to God, remembering He is just. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that we have access to the Father so that we can pray in faith.





JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PRAYER

Jesus taught His disciples to pray with faith, persistence and dependence on God.

JESUS CONNECTION



Jesus taught us to pray with dependence on God, recognizing only He can supply our physical and spiritual needs, with faith in God, knowing He is our good and loving Father, and with persistence to God, remembering He is just. The death and resurrection of Jesus gives us access to the Father so that we can pray in faith.



LIFEWISE QUALITY

PERSISTENCE – Repeatedly practicing a good behavior until it's habit.



HEAD

What is the importance of Jesus teaching His disciples to pray to God as “Our Father”? How is He like an earthly father? How is He different?

What did Jesus prioritize in His prayer? What did He ask for? What didn't He ask for?



HEART

If we believe in Jesus' death and resurrection, we are part of God's family. According to Jesus, how can we expect God the Father to respond to us when we pray? Does that encourage you to be persistent when you pray? Why or why not?

Our persistence in prayer will always depend on whether we see God as good and willing to provide for us. But Paul said that if God has already given us Jesus, "How will He not also with Him grant us everything?" (Rom. 8:32). How does God's gift of Jesus prove that He is a good God who is ready to hear our prayers?



HANDS

Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer so we would have an example of how to approach God and what we should ask Him for. Go through each section of the prayer (listed below) and write down 1-2 specific things you can pray to God or ask God for in that area. Then, pray for those things every day this week.

Father, your name be honored as holy.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us.

And do not bring us into temptation.